

TROOP GOVERNMENT

Girl Adult Partnership

Once a troop is established, girls need to help decide which form of government they will use for their troop. At the Girl Scout Daisy and Brownie levels, this is easy, as each level has a prescribed method of troop government (see below). But, when the girls reach Girl Scout Juniors and on through Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors, the girls take on more responsibility of running the troop and thus should decide which form of government they will use. You may want to try all three forms out before the girls make a final decision. And, if the system they chose is not working for the troop, the troop can then decide on another form of government for themselves.

Forms of Government

Daisy Circle (Girl Scout Daisies)

Girl Scout Daisies can help make some of the decisions about their troop through the Daisy Circle. Meetings are held about once a month or so for 10-15 minutes and they are led by the Troop Leader. At this age, it is best for the Leader to give girls two or three choices to pick from. Decisions could include things such as where to go on a field trip or what kind of service project the girls would like to participate in. Simplicity is the key here.

Brownie Ring (Girl Scout Brownies)

The Brownie Ring is very similar to the Daisy Circle but expands to the abilities of these now somewhat "older" girls. Girls can now begin to lead discussions and "brainstorm" ideas. A Ring "Leader" may be designated to lead discussions but make sure that all girls are given this leadership opportunity. If your group is very large, you can divide the group into smaller units, called Brownie Circles, to make it easier to accomplish some tasks. When someone wishes to speak, a special "Talking Signal" is used in the Brownie Ring. This is indicated by the girl placing the two fingers of her right hand on the floor (or table, if you are seated at a table instead of the floor). The Brownie Ring is a good way to make all of the major decisions in your troop from how to spend Girl Scout Cookie profits to which Journey to work on next.

Executive Board (Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors)

The Executive Board consists of the "officers" of the troop. They generally include a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Job descriptions should be agreed upon as well as the duration of office. It is important, especially at the beginning of self-government, that everyone has the opportunity to participate at some time throughout the year. These "board" members meet on a regular basis to decide matters for the troop. Some method needs to be devised for the troop members to give input to the Executive Board. This could be a simple suggestion box at a troop meeting. This system tends to work well with smaller troops.

Town Meeting (Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors)

In a Town Meeting, the entire troop makes its decisions together. A Moderator is generally needed to lead group discussions. Officers such as Secretary and Treasurer may be elected if the troop feels that there is a need. This generally only works well in small groups but can work in large groups if the girls can stay on task.

Patrol System (Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors)

The Patrol System is the most versatile of the systems of government. The troop is divided into smaller units called Patrols. The ideal patrol size is about 5-8 girls. Each Patrol elects a Patrol Leader responsible for running their patrol meetings. An Assistant Patrol Leader is also a good idea in the event that the Patrol Leader cannot make a meeting. All troop business can be handled in these patrols. Attendance and dues can be recorded by the patrols. For any given outing, chores may be divided up with each patrol responsible for its own task. In order for the troop to run smoothly and as a group, Patrol Leaders should come together periodically (at least once a month) to discuss troop issues and make group decisions. This is called the "Court of Honor." Each patrol gives their input to the Patrol Leader who presents their viewpoint at the Court of Honor. Also included in the Court of Honor are any other troop officers such as Secretary and Treasurer. The Patrol System can be very successful, but only if the girls are given the skills with which to succeed.

Girl Adult Partnership

One of the basic threads running throughout the Girl Scout program is that of girl/adult partnership. To grow strong, girls need to be partners in decision-making from the very beginning – whether choosing from a list of activities as a Girl Scout Daisy or making sure the trip has enough adult supervision for Girl Scout Ambassadors. As the leader, your goal should be to act increasingly as a facilitator, enabling girls to experience more opportunities for planning, decision-making, leadership and, yes, even failure. Adults who understand and make a conscious effort to facilitate these experiences help build girls of courage, confidence and character.

WAYS TO INVOLVE GIRLS IN PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP AND THE ROLE OF ADULTS IN THE GIRL/ADULT PARTNERSHIP

The chart indicates actions and concepts that can be used at each grade level to ensure girl/adult planning and leadership experiences for girls. The bottom of the chart indicates the role of adults in girl/adult partnership.

Girl Scout Daisies	Girl Scout Brownies	Girl Scout Juniors	Girl Scout Cadettes	Girl Scouts Seniors & Ambassadors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girl Scout Daisy Circle • Either/or decision-making • "It" and "Other" bag • Girls learning the basics of group process and self-government • Development of basic human relations skills • Participation in service projects to gain a sense of self and community <p>ADULT ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give 2-3 choices. • Hold mom and me events. • Hold family and me events. • Have direct adult supervision. • Match each girl's ability to activities. • Ask girls and parents what they do at home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girl Scout Brownie Ring, self-government with adult guidance • Use of a "talking stick" to express ideas • Girls organizing and delegating responsibilities through <u>kaper charts</u> • Simple brainstorming, with reality checks • Concrete choices • Participation in service projects to gain a sense of self and community <p>ADULT ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen choices before voting. • Discuss implications before voting. • Facilitate "guided failures." • Have guided budgeting. • Take into account the physical and mental differences between first and second graders. • Have guided group evals. • Oversee simple tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic government—<u>patrol system</u>, or town meeting carried out by girls • Brainstorming • Active participation in all steps of planning and carrying out tasks • Girls setting ground rules • Ownership of ideas • Fairness • Girls competently leading discussion by grade 5 • Guided group evaluation • Older girls helping younger girls • Working independently or in small groups <p>ADULT ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take into account developmental differences between girls in grade 4 and grade 5. • Step back; guide. • Input 50 percent of the time when girls are in grade 5. • Encourage girl/adult partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Patrol system</u>, representative government • Girls planning and doing troop activities • Program Aide leadership project • Girls working independently; program activities self-determined • Girls doing activities beyond the troop • Leadership skills training • Decision-making based on info gathering • Budgeting for long-term projects and events • Group review and self-evaluation • Apprenticeship • Girls' learning to network <p>ADULT ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use role modeling (very important). • Act as a facilitator; give guidance. • Let girls make mistakes and learn from them. • Allow girls and adults to function on an almost equal level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Patrol system</u>, representative government, Older Girl Scout planning boards • Leadership projects—Program Aides, Leaders-in-Training, Counselors-in-Training • Girls involvement in girl/adult planning teams • Girls serving as girl members of the council board of directors or as delegates to national events • Girls planning entire events, if experienced • Girls working individually, as well as in committees • Group review and self-evaluation • Apprenticeship • Networking • Experiences providing specific tools for full girl/adult partnership—e.g., leading meetings, attending board training workshops <p>ADULT ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let girls make mistakes and learn from them. • Mentor girls. • Be a facilitator and partner.

*Note that the role of adults changes as the girls' skills increase.

SO. . . . I've incorporated these steps into my troop and we've been working hard on trying to gently ease into girl/adult planning and partnership. How can I tell that it is working?

Glad you asked! Turn the page for some great signs that you are successfully using girl/adult planning and girl/adult partnership.

Signs that Girl/Adult Partnership is Working

We know girl/adult partnership and planning is happening at their particular level when:

- Girls are allowed to make mistakes (as long as they are non-life threatening).
- Everyone has a chance to voice her opinion.
- Brainstorming is an accepted way of generating ideas.
- Girls and adults are talking with each other.
- Girls are participating in self-government.
- The leader asks girls what is going to happen.
- Girls are making their own plans, and adults are encouraging them.
- There is evidence of compromise.
- Trust exists on both sides.
- Girls tell the leader the agenda.
- Girls are actively directing an event.
- Adults are sitting around serenely.
- Adults are close enough to answer questions when needed—and far enough away not to interfere.
- Girls are planning complete events.
- Adults ask, "What can I do?"
- Girls take responsibility for getting consultants, drivers and permission forms and for looking up Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Adults do not speak for girls if groups are asked to report out.
- Strengths are utilized, and weaknesses are given an opportunity to strengthen.
- Everyone's schedules are taken into consideration.
- Meetings run smoothly and in a timely fashion, with everyone participating.
- The leader asks each girl in the troop for her opinion.
- Both girls and adults live up to agreements and project commitments.
- Girls and adults say "our" project.
- Everyone's ideas are respected.
- Responsibilities are rotated equally or agreed upon democratically.
- Adults can let go of ideas, traditions, histories and stereotypes.
- Girls take the adults along "to drive the car and sign the checks."
- The leader comes back "less tired" and more relaxed than her girls.
- A girl says "I can do that—I can do anything."
- The premise that Girl Scouting is for the girl guides decision-making.

*Comments from Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors and their leaders.